



NEWS RELEASE

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USDA AND CDC SIGN NORTH AMERICAN RABIES MANAGEMENT PLAN WITH CANADA AND MEXICO

WASHINGTON, Oct. 3, 2008--The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) today signed the *North American Rabies Management Plan* with Canada and Mexico. The plan's aim is to strengthen cooperation and communication among the three countries in addressing wildlife rabies management and control.

"This plan is a crucial step to controlling rabies not only in the United States, but throughout North America," said Cindy Smith, APHIS administrator. "It solidifies our strong relationships with Canada and Mexico, as well as our federal and state partners, in addressing this potentially deadly virus in wildlife populations through information sharing and strategic planning."

The *North American Rabies Management Plan*, which is the culmination of more than three years of work by APHIS' wildlife services program, CDC and the governments of Canada and Mexico, establishes a framework and forum for constructive interaction among the countries to build long-term wildlife rabies management goals. The plan, signed at the 2008 Rabies in the Americas Conference, calls for annual meetings between the three countries to share information about oral rabies vaccine research, wildlife management, population control and surveillance techniques.

Collaboration between the three countries already is successful in controlling rabies in wildlife. Representatives from the United States and Canada in the fields of health, agriculture and wildlife management work together each year to provide expert information and guidance to develop complimentary rabies management plans to ensure the virus' containment in wildlife. In recent years, APHIS and Mexican officials also have worked to successfully contain and eliminate canine rabies in coyotes in south Texas.

"We've made tremendous strides in our efforts to combat rabies, particularly canine rabies. However, people are at risk from this terrible disease because it is still present in other types of wildlife," said CDC Director Dr. Julie Gerberding. "We must remain vigilant and this unprecedented agreement will enable us to continue to protect people from rabies."

Because human cases of rabies in North America are often the result of exposure to wildlife with the virus, each country works to eliminate the virus in its wildlife populations. In the United States, APHIS' wildlife services program staff established the *National Rabies Management Program* in 1997. That program was developed to prevent further spread of rabies in gray fox, coyotes and raccoons by using oral rabies vaccines in wildlife, as well as increasing public education.

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